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Coraddi

When I have fears that I may cease to be  
    Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain,  
Before high-piled books, in charact'ry,  
    Hold like rich garners the full-ripen'd grain;  
When I behold, upon the night's starr'd face,  
    Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,  
And think that I may never live to trace  
    Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance;  
And when I feel, fair creature of an hour,  
    That I shall never look upon thee more,  
Never have relish in the faery power  
    Of unreflecting love! — then on the shore  
Of the wide world I stand alone, and think  
    Till Love and Fame to nothingness do sink.

JOHN KEATS

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# CORADDI

The Woman's College of the University of North Carolina  
Greensboro, North Carolina

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Sylvia Wilkinson

LANDSCAPE

Ink on Rice Paper

## Encounter

It was last night.  
Moonscent and wildscent lay upon the air;  
The stiff pine hair  
Stirred uneasily,  
And I stepped from my stone to moss.

The deer lifted.  
Flinty feet,  
Black, quiver-wet noses,  
The ancient flickering eyes of beasts waiting in the wood:  
Dimly they stood  
In ancient gazing noses.

The fragrance of suspicion  
Passed between us  
Like a watercloud before the sun.

The old doe snorted.  
The others, obeying,  
Fled.

What old evil out of the long dark of life  
Had fallen there?  
Upon us in the wood?  
That once warm play of brown sunlit fur,  
That limber laughter of thin bare flesh,  
A boy and fawn . . .?  
The green gaywings have flown.

Now I hunt alone,  
In a dark forest,  
In a month of winds,  
To the noise of dogs.

HEATHER ROSS MILLER

## Evening

The mediterranean mountains fold, bend, adorn  
Their limbs, as  
Pretty wantons in the stare of sunlight.  
I sit with this afternoon;  
A door to front of me, a door to back of me.  
And a stairway's ghost to my side.  
The mountains flow past us  
And into us,  
Pushing the hall draught around scuttle corners.  
Like the old knees of old giants,  
Or old elbows,  
These mountains rest, fretfully.  
And so we fret ourselves,  
You in a blue vacancy of puzzle,  
I in an old fury.  
And so we find rest.

HEATHER ROSS MILLER

3

## December

They have whispered we were wanton in the sunlight,  
In the rolling, leaping sun.  
They have whispered from forest windows  
And the grey river,  
From a cathedral of birds.  
Now our song is told in the streets  
And our face is drawn in sanguine.  
The remembering embers  
Shudder softly,  
Settle softly,  
And, long after the glowing logs snap,  
They nourish our long winter's nap.

HEATHER ROSS MILLER

## Waiting To Be

There were many things then  
Waiting to be understood.  
"A year from now . . ."  
It hardly mattered when.  
Tomorrow we could not make it less by waiting.

The urgency seemed real enough  
Under the bedcovers, in the shadows,  
Inescapable, laughing down the chimneys  
Of doll houses.

We played like we were dolls  
Then broke our necks one day.

Grandmother's house was SOLD  
And the men didn't wipe their feet;  
Ceiling cracks had told their stories  
Last to the laughing ghosts.

Down the alley old things died.  
Nathan had called through the gate, "We found your cat."  
And that was all; he was the only one  
We'd hear talk about it afterwards.

We used to hide in the dark, warm rooms,  
Smelling of washing and heating irons  
And listen to the counting.  
Slow and far away.

To be ready or not!

On the sidewalks, the women called,  
And when we'd ask them to  
They'd bring down their baskets  
To show how it was done.  
We'd feel the chill of the silver cup.

At Christmas everyday was put away,  
So when the fires were going  
We'd start the presents round;  
All day long, to the houses, to the country  
Moving roads and trees, and finally,  
Aunts began to say the same;  
Uncles were told they laughed too loud.  
The new wife looked like the old.

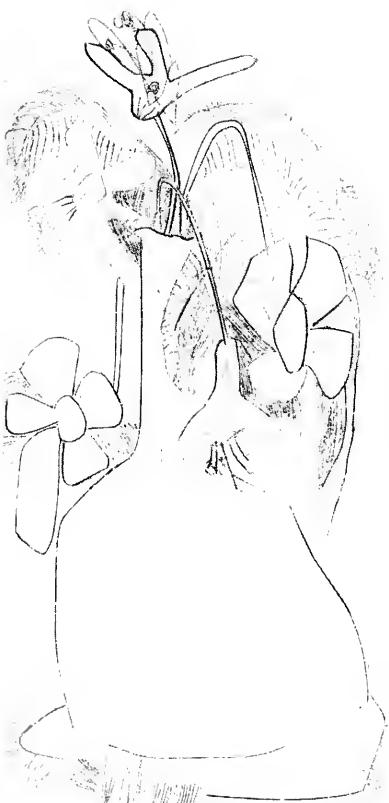
We left, in sizes too small  
With letters to write.

The stars were like the biggest cry you ever had  
And we were going home to sleep.  
We whispered until they heard us say,  
"Why was everything so like that?"

Now it is time again to remember  
A holiday waiting to be ended.  
The voice of Jacob is somewhere in the shuffling,  
And we have been let out to play again.

The train goes on and we are like children  
Awakened in the night by lights and voices  
More real than all our fears.

EMILY HERRING



EUPHORIA

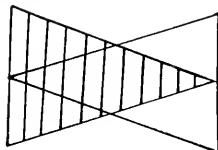
Phyllis Taylor

Engraving

# A VISION IN TWO SONGS

Louise Efird

In *A Vision* Yeats was attempting to establish a code which would synthesize all the contradictory elements in the universe. A basic unity—one of being, of culture, of the individual man—Yeats felt sure, exists in spite of the chaotic appearance which meets the eye. He has taken two fundamental symbols, intersecting geometric cones or gyres and an astrological cycle, and applied them to all men, all eras, and all history. The simplest diagram of Yeats' theory is seen in the two intersecting cones, the apex of one meeting the base of the other:



The cones represent the relationship between the antimonies of reality and, as images of reality, are never static; rather they are eternally cycling gyres which exist in and move through history as well as the life of a single man. When viewed from a perspective perpendicular to the given one, the cones appear as a pair of concentric circles with varying proportions of each other. Yeats illustrates his idea further by using the spheres as an astrological symbol, the phases of the moon. Both the multi-proportionate spheres appearing in the cross-sections of the cones and the cycle of the phases of the moon demonstrate the changing combinations of opposing elements within in reality.

Whether applied on a smaller scale to the contradictions within a man's personality or on a larger scale to the epochs and civilizations in history, Yeats' theory is fundamentally the same. There is a single phrase, taken from Heraclitus and alluded to periodically throughout *A Vision*, which seems to me to be the key to the entire system: "All things dying each other's life, living each other's death." The cones are a physical or symbolic illustration of an intangible reality. As the circumference of one cone increases, that of the other diminishes, and vice-versa. Similarly, as one element within a man's personality becomes dominant, its antithesis begins to disappear; and in the epochs of history, what brings the genesis of one era is the ultimate destruction of the one preceding it. The idea is somewhat Hegelian in that everything contains the seeds of its own destruction, and out of that destruction arises a new entity.

According to Yeats' calculation, the cycles within history are completed approximately every two thousand years, and each of these cycles goes through its various "phases of the moon." Our present epoch, or "the Christian Era," began with the annunciation made to the Virgin Mary. The one preceding it, the Greco-Roman world, had its genesis with the rape of Leda by Zeus in the form of a swan. There are obvious parallels between these two supernatural occurrences, as manifested in such poems as "Leda and the Swan" and "Wisdom." Yeats is uncertain of the era which the annunciation of Leda rejected, but, as one would expect and as he explicitly states in *A Vision*, he "can see bird and woman blotting out some corner of the Babylonian mathematical starlight." As our own epoch is drawing to a close and "Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world," Yeats visualizes in

"The Second Coming" an approaching crisis and the birth of a new Messiah, with ambiguous potential—more probably a monster than a blessing:

And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,  
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

Yeats' attempt to find unity and system within the universe and his theory of reality as set down in *A Vision* appear and reappear in his poetry after the completion of that book. "Two Songs from a Play" is a concise, yet remarkably thorough, illustration of the universal structure as seen in *A Vision*.

## Two Songs from a Play

1

I saw a staring virgin stand  
Where holy Dionysus died,  
And tear the heart out of his side,  
And lay the heart upon her hand,  
And bear that beating heart away;  
And then did all the Muses sing  
Of Magnus Annus at the spring,  
As though God's death were but a play.  
Another Troy must rise and set,  
Another lineage feed the crow,  
Another Argo's painted prow  
Drive to a flashier bauble yet.  
The Roman Empire stood appalled:  
It dropped the reigns of peace and war  
When that fierce virgin and her Star  
Out of the fabulous darkness called.

## II

In pity for man's darkening thought  
He walked that room and issued thence  
In Galilean turbulence;  
The Babylonian starlight brought  
A fabulous, formless darkness in;  
Odour of blood when Christ was slain  
Made all Platonic tolerance vain  
And vain all Doric discipline.  
Everything that man esteems  
Endures a moment or a day.  
Love's pleasure drives his love away,  
The painter's brush consumes his dreams;  
The herald's cry, the soldier's tread  
Exhaust his glory and his might:  
Whatever flames upon the night  
Man's own resinous heart has fed.

In this poem there is a skillful merging of the Greco-Roman culture and the Christian culture. Since each era began with a similar event and since each must go through the similar "phases of the moon," many of the words can be ambiguously interpreted. In this case, however, the poet has chosen to use the death and resurrection of Dionysus as analogous to that of Christ, rather than the Leda and Mary parallel. The virgins referred to here are Athena and Mary. According to classical mythology, Dionysus was completely dismembered by the Titans, but Athena managed to secure his heart, still beating, and took it to Zeus, who gave the god of wine a new birth. The death and rebirth of Dionysus occurred in the spring, at the same time of year and under the same astrological signs as the crucifixion of Jesus. This fact conveniently makes place for an interplay of allusions and images in the first song.

Although the virgin in the first line is Athena,

the adjective "staring" recalls rather a picture of the mother of Christ at the foot of the cross. Ironically, in the next to the last line of the second stanza, where the virgin is Mary, the chosen epithet "fierce" suggests more a characteristic of Athena as the helmeted goddess of wisdom, wielding her father's thunderbolt, than the traditional innocence of Mary. The implications of such ambiguity fit the two women and the two incidents into the pattern of historical cycles, reveal the repetition of phases, and suggest a sense of unity between the past and the present and, implicitly, the future. The same type of impressions can be inferred from other allusions in Yeats' mythological accounts. "And tear the heart out of his side" has overtones of the wound in Christ's side at his death, although it actually refers to Athena's salvaging Dionysus' heart. The last three lines of the first stanza, while not bearing special significance regarding the Christian legend, can be read to mean cycles of different magnitude. The association of the Muses with all arts and the association of Dionysus with the specific art of classical drama are the foundations of this image. The spring season was characterized for the ancients by festivals of tragic drama in honor of Dionysus. Thus, the cycle of a solar year is implied. But the term "Magnus Annus" allows the gyre to wind much wider. In Book IV of *A Vision*, called "The Great Year of the Ancients," Yeats discussed the Ciceronian explication of the Magnus Annus. According to that classical rhetorician, the Great Year was the lapse of time taken for all the constellations to return to their original positions and would extend through almost countless generations of men; but for convenience, the Magnus Annus had been subdivided into much shorter periods, for instance the time lapse until the sun and moon returned to their original positions. As a result, the allusion to the "Magnus Annus at the spring" in the seventh line of "Two Songs from a Play" is another ambiguity and not only recollects the annual theatrical festivals but also suggests that perhaps "God's death" recurs "at the spring" of a much larger year (whether Cicero's Magnus Annus or Yeats' two thousand year cycles), as indeed it did within the Christian era. The phrase, "As if God's death were but a play," carries a tone of self-negation; but if Yeats' historical theory is borne in mind, an affirmation of the possibility must replace the denial—for the act is performed again every cycle.

In the second stanza of the first song Yeats has carefully chosen his details. In mentioning a notable event of one cycle and saying that it will happen again in the next, he telescopes into the same line the whole cycle through which that particular thing passed. "Another Troy must rise and set"; not only did the great city dominate a great era, but it had its own cycles or phases of the moon, as connotations of the words "rise and set" make clear. The next line gives another detail to illustrate Yeats' point further: "Another lineage feed the crow." Within these five words, Yeats has compressed the generation and destruction of a race of men. "Lineage" might refer to any tribe of men, but viewed within the context of the poem it would seem to be like the race begotten by Zeus upon Leda. And with the last three words, "feed the crow," certainly could apply to the ruin of the accursed house of Agamamnon. But whatever race it may be, it is so completely annihilated that it doesn't even merit a vulture to devour it; instead, it is scattered in such small remnants as to provide dinner for a crow. In the next two lines the conquest of Jason for the Golden Fleece becomes a mere trifle of experience. The Argo's prow is "painted," implying

that its splendor is quickly to peel away. The Golden Fleece is called a "bauble," a gewgaw, a mere and insignificant piece of finery; and the fact that it is "flash(y)" implies that it is either gaudy or only dazzling for the moment. Whatever qualities are assigned to the Fleece will recur, perhaps to an even greater degree, in ensuing history. The next object of conquest may be even "flashier."

The last four lines of the first song illustrate the transition between two specific historical eras, "dying each other's life, living each other's death." The Roman Empire represented order and control; it held sway over a consciously manipulated world and ruled it schematically. The "reins of peace and war" were in its hands, implying that under the dominion of the Roman Empire neither war nor peace was arbitrary, so thoroughly systematized was the classical existence. With the coming of Christ, the Empire and all that it stood for was "appalled." Yeats has carefully chosen his word here: "appalled" means that it was shocked or astounded, but the word also gives a hint of death. The next line confirms this implication with the metaphorical hand "drop(ping) the reins," as its strength flowed out. The "fierce virgin and her Star" issued in a new kind of enlightenment; but the new civilization which the birth of Christ generated was no longer based on order, but rather on dogma and superstition. "Peace and war" were now arbitrary indeed—there was no strong Roman hand to hold them in check. "Out of the fabulous darkness called," shows that the new enlightenment was ambiguous and was also a form of veiling; the voice of Christianity is shrouded in a "fabulous darkness" of dogmatism as opposed to the rationalism characteristic of the Greco-Roman world. The adjective chosen for "darkness" has double connotations: "fabulous" means 'astonishing' and at the same time 'legendary.' This word thus indicates the ambiguity of the overwhelming impact of the Christian civilization: a shocking awakening or a blind lulling to sleep by the music of superstition and miracle? In the chapters of *A Vision* where Yeats discusses the specific phases of history he conceives of Christ as controlling the "irrational force," something his predecessors had not been able to deal with; his success in doing this was based on the fact that he substituted "miracle" for "reason."

In the first song in "Two Songs from a Play" the progression is from spring and Easter to Christmas. The second proceeds again to Easter and in the last stanza applies the cyclical theory to the individual man. The transitional tie between the two songs is the "fabulous darkness" characteristic of the new era. The first three lines of the second song, dealing with the trial of Jesus and its results, also illustrate the broader interpretation, that the world which is victim to the new epoch is subjected to the same fate. "In pity for man's darkening thought" is ironic in the sense that it was the birth of Christ which introduced that "darkening thought" that He died to save it from. And the irony reaches an apex with the realization that the "odour of (His) blood" brought that "darkening thought" to consummation. The second line of the second song is expressed in archaic and Biblical terms, such as "issued thence," and is in harmony with the mood of the event. The "Galilean turbulence" is both the violence of Calvary for Christ and the effect of the new religion of intolerance and superstition reigning in a world emancipated from reason and order. The next two lines flash back to the Babylonian captivity under which the Hebrew dogma hardened, thus issuing a "fabulous, formless

darkness in." There is an interesting juggle of words here (comparable to the ambiguity between enlightenment and darkness born out of the coming of Christ) in that it was under the "Babylonian starlight" that the darkness was brought in. This is the same darkness out of which "that fierce virgin and her Star" (in the first song) called; only it is even darker because it is "formless." Christ was the Messiah of this darkness, and when the stench of his dying reached the world's nostrils, the result was cataclysmic: the "odour of blood" overwhelmed the "Platonic tolerance" and "Doric discipline" of the highly civilized classical era, because this new thing man could feel, and thus it was stronger to him. Next to the "odour of blood," the cultured but faint perfume of Greco-Roman order was blotted out. The changing phases in *A Vision*—in which the antithetical elements within nature are rearranged and reportioned—reached the ultimate point, at which the elements are reversed.

The last stanza of the second song moves the setting from the universal level to the microcosmic stage of man, just as Yeats in *A Vision* linked the smaller cycles of an individual life to the larger ones of history. It is notable that the images Yeats uses in this stanza are all taken from instances of intuitive or physical experience rather than from instances of Platonic reason or civilized order, even though throughout the poem he has been showing that both kinds of existence are self-destructive, that all achievement is self-consuming. This is indeed congruent with the age to which he is victim, but in consideration of the bulk of Yeats' poetry, it is readily congruent with the man himself. It is like his greater sympathy with the "self" than with the "soul" in "A Dialogue of Self and Soul." He is like those "Caught in the sensual music of neglect / Monuments of unaging intellect" in "Sailing to Byzantium." (Even though he is aging and says he prefers the "artifice of eternity," he cannot conceal the fact that he does hear that "sensual music" and that he laments his soul being "fastened to a dying animal.") And in the last two lines of "Two Songs from a Play" it is "Man's own resinous heart" and not his mind or soul that has fed "Whatever flames upon the night." The melancholy tone resulting from the vision which spurred Yeats to write this poem (i.e., "I saw a staring virgin stand / Where holy Dionysus died," etc.) is brought to a climax in this last stanza: "Everything that man esteems / Endures a moment or a day." And from the allusions that follow, one realizes what the man esteems. It is love that is exhausted by his pleasure, the artist's dreams that are consumed by their physical manifestation, the strength of the herald and the soldier that escapes with the physical exertion—the "cry," the "tread." If Yeats had taken for his examples the finished theory of *The Republic* as the death of Plato's philosophical turmoil on the subject and the nuclear equation as the termination of the physicist's mathematical contemplation, the effect would have been very different. But Yeats, the man and poet, would not have used such examples, and it is for this reason that the last stanza is somewhat set apart from the others in "Two Songs from a Play." Yet its uniqueness does not destroy the unity of his poem; Yeats has merely allowed the progression from objectivity to subjectivity to plot its own path. Especially in consideration of his own conception of "Unity," in which all the antithetical elements must be present, he has achieved a successful unity for the poem. And the last two lines, while bearing a significance inde-

pendent of the first song, contain words whose connotations link them to it. Independently, the final image has made man's heart inflammable ("resinous") and has allowed reality, or time, or whatever force it may be, to "flame upon the night." The heart of man is the fuel of the flames. But the choice of words—"flames," "night," "resinous," and "heart"—ties in with the first few lines of the poem about Dionysus. "Flame" and "night" and "resinous" recall the religious Bacchanalian rites of the ancients, when the frenzied bacchantes ran through the streets at night carrying pine torches. And it was the "heart" of Dionysus that Athena saved. Since Dionysus is the God of wine and since the "heart" represents that sensitive and sensual side of man, there is an intermingling of meaning between the objective and the subjective elements in the poem. Thus the unity is preserved.

\* \* \*

Several days ago I fell upon a statement of Oscar Wilde's which on the surface seems to have little relevance to Yeats' "Two Songs from a Play." But the resultant effect which it produced on my consciousness is strongly present in my interpretation of "Two Songs from a Play." The statement of Wilde's was this: "Life is a comedy for those who think; it is a tragedy for those who feel." The pattern into which one falls is perhaps, at least partially, a matter of choice, because one is capable of both thinking and feeling. But it is only a half choice, because within each person one element or the other is usually stronger. This fact, however, does not completely eliminate the concept of choice. It is possible, through a premeditated act of will, to force either element to the foreground; but in doing so one might be living, not himself, but his "mask." Yet, when I consider how Yeats during a period tried to force the artificial element forward, as in "Sailing to Byzantium," I see that at the most he could only live a tragicomedy, and at best he would be satisfied to provide some comic relief for his life-tragedy. Thus it is only very early that one can even consider the choice. As the gyre keeps winding and as the elements "die each other's life, live each other's death," the choice is only in selecting which classification to hang on the marquee of the theatre: the play itself is already written.

In correlating this train of consciousness with "Two Songs from a Play" I am caught up in an eddy of contemplation. Did the ancients in choosing to make this springtime festival one of tragic drama see themselves celebrating the Dionysian element in man, properly according to Wilde? Did Yeats himself see tragedy as the fate of the feeling man? Was it not the "darkness" and "blood" of the anti-rational Incarnation that "Made all Platonic tolerance vain / And vain all Doric discipline?" And is there not an implication of bitterness toward the irrational force which made it impossible for man to look at himself and understand and laugh? Was not Christ indeed the tragedian of the world's stage? Are not men his puppets? And though the Christ has become only a gigantic "foolybear" (a new Messiah now "slouches toward Bethlehem to be born"), his truth is immortal. That element to which he appealed, that "heart" of man, still generates its own destruction—knowing all the while that its most perfect creation will cause its most perfect annihilation, knowing that in letting itself become a blaze it is self-consuming: it does not hesitate to strike the match.



Lily Wiley      PORTRAIT      Brush and Ink

### The Chinese Orphan

Here, in Hong Kong, I wander the dirty streets,  
Wondering who I am.  
The first thing I remember is a man  
Who brought me food,  
So kind,  
And then I had to pay.  
After he went away,  
I ran to the river and prayed to the moon,  
So bright and big.  
But nothing happened,  
So today, I wander the dirty streets.

I had a doll once,  
A gray man gave it to me after,  
I loved to be her mother,  
Tell her how to grow up good.  
Be rich, I'd say,  
And without hunger, need or fear,  
But now she's broken,  
She can not blink her eyes.  
She does not listen to me any more,  
I guess she's dead,  
And the silence of others is condemning.

SUSAN CHAPPELEAR

### DORA

Bettie Anderson

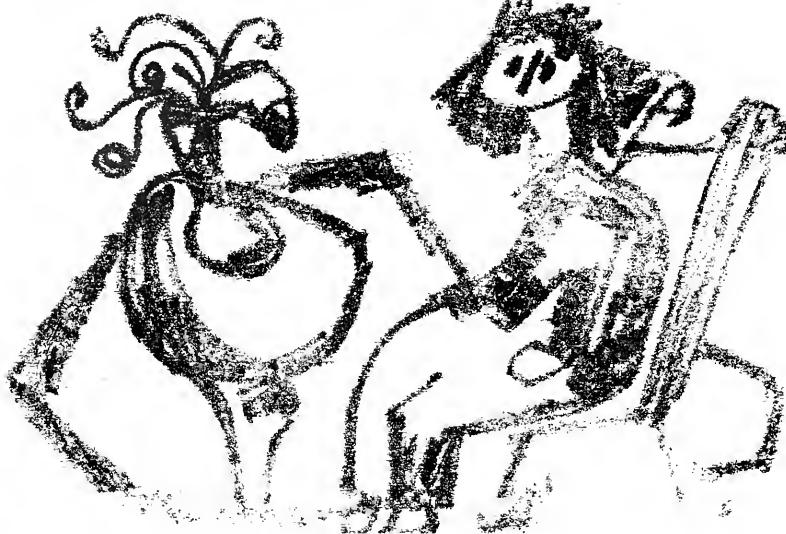
I can still remember when I was young and had a doll, Dora. I sometimes, and often too, wonder where she is; I suppose I'll never know. Oddly, that really doesn't matter since she was lost to me too long ago. One day, when yesterday was here, I felt I ought at least to go and seek her, as if I am responsible for her being lost. And I had secretly hoped that she would find me, too. Losing is one of the risks you run when you live. How often I've shuffled up or down a gliding path, making one nasty mess of everything while going somewhere. Now it's nowhere. The path keeps on and on, gliding along like a conveyor belt and I'm just a dead weight, too heavy for it to carry along. Sometimes I sway slightly with it, but somehow the smooth relentlessness of the belt has passed under my feet so long that they've become numb, hypnotized, and I feel that there is only an empty space between my head and the belt—no contact. Just like looking backwards in a moving car until the road is moving and the car seems still, and so still. Is there an end to the belt? No. You just keep going or staying and having no memories of the future or past. I am . . . It all began on a Sunday—very unfitting—and why then I will always wonder. As usual I had eaten and had lain down, Dora beside me, and she wasn't often beside me. Somewhere else instead. I could not lie so still beside her any longer as if I were in favor of what she had been doing. She was a tender towel who tried to wipe me dry of my suspicions, a luxuriously soft towel, but I had seen, and I knew that were I to believe her, it would be like climbing a tower of her lies, getting to the top with nowhere else to go (except back down) and then falling down into her soft lusciousness. I climbed down and left and, when gone, imagined a low filthy dog in her bed. I saw a match that said 'pick me up,' lit it; it burned brightly and more brightly until it was a living room of fire and then a bedroom and another and another. The walls oozed yellow, red, and blue venom, or at least so it seemed to me. The roof was the red hennaed hair of a fifty year old actress, wavy and crinkly as if it were riding in a convertible with the wind blowing through it. Perhaps it was a lovely sight. I saw the smell of the burnt wood and retched. Only the house, like a bonfire on a dry, uncluttered beach, burning. When there was just a red incandescent glow, I wanted to draw near and get warm. I came there and everything was cold and black and rather soggy since the rain and things smelled terribly dead. Dora wasn't there or the bed—but the dog was. His eyes were reflections of what the fire had once been, he lunged at me, I ran and ran until I lost him but now I had lost myself. Whenever I am a man again I will live. Now I have seen the last of everything and must live. Dora is gone, where I wouldn't dare say. Goodbye, Dora, and smooth glide.



Lily Wiley

THE TRINITY

Oil



Melissa Bassler

W's MOTHER

Etching

### Numbers

In this interminable night  
 right where I am let me run  
 out here where even a child cannot count  
 and one and one is one forever;  
 away from the endless talk of circle voices  
 babbling about numbers  
 and of what he said and she said  
 and above all, what I said.  
 Meat prices, car prices,  
 batting averages, team averages,  
 a so much pounder, women's pounds,  
 gallons to a dollar, three for a dollar,  
 hours for a dollar.

Here in the calm blue-bearded twilight  
 where feet talk to pavements  
 and doors talk to door frames  
 the wrong that is wrong and will not ever be right  
 is forgotten with the haze of numbers  
 revolving rapidly remotely  
 in another galaxy

EVELYN PRICE

### Maud

A sluggishly naked bulb hangs from the cracked ceiling,  
 and flies, irresistibly drawn to it,  
 burn their noses, trying to find some good in it.  
 Maud, whose hair was this color, of stale, smoky beer,  
 laughed so maddeningly  
 before the boys marched through and shouted their songs,  
 are gone, and the echo of their feet  
 has been silent in the hills, no longer  
 rolls in the valleys.

Give us again what we wanted  
 the direct-laugh assurance of today.  
 You carried a box filled with feathers and felt,  
 but packed the days marked "tomorrow" within,  
 stuffed them in crepe paper and walked away.  
 Come back and laugh Maud.  
 Put up your foamy hair which bubbled down your neck  
 and with one last mocking laugh  
 remind us of our lost tomorrows.

EVELYN PRICE



Nancy Estes

HORSE

Lithograph

## PURPLE VELVET DRESS

Sylvia Wilkinson

Rain and hail hit the tin roof, drowning out the hissing of the machinery. Water poured over the sides of the roof, falling in a solid sheet in front of the window and driving a ditch in the ground below. Tenants huddled hopelessly against the trees and under the wagons, looking like wet brown rats. The corn leaves flattened and tangled around the stalks, unable to open their funnels to the needle-like force of the rain. Corn stalks bent towards the ground and would not stand straight until the weight lifted.

An imp-like man pressed his cheek against the window and glanced sideways through the cracked glass. He twisted his warped shoulders around and looked down at the brown figure on the floor.

"Too hard, ain't gon leave an ounce of topsoil round that corn," and he lifted his head stiffly and repeated, "too hard, but it's better'n nothing." Then the stiff chin tossed up unexpectedly from the bent body and a grin forced the pinched face into wrinkles. "Betya old man's bacca looks like them persimmon trees what the caterpillars got. Heh, told him only way to get money was with corn. Hail'll strip off a little foddler but that ain't what counts with corn," and he looked down at the little brown figure that was scrubbing the floor in a circle of suds. "No sir, just got to save them sweet yellow grains what grinds up so nice; that's what brings in the money."

"Pa says you won't talk so big when the govement men catches you," as the figure spoke without looking up or stopping the circular sweep of the scrub rag.

"He did, hnh. Well you just tell your Pa that Samuel T. Shaw ain't about to get outsmarted by no revenueurs."

"Pa says they gon spot that chimney smoking someday and gon wonder what you needs such a hot fire for in the summertime."

"Huh, there's lots of reasons for smoke in the summertime—picking chickens, canning stuff, lots of reasons."

"Pa says they gon find out someday that Alma's boy choked cause he got hold of some of your rotten stuff from your cheap galvernine . . . ."

"Shut up, damn it, shut up! Your Pa's just jealous—stupid dirt farmer—crawling round on his knees ain't gon put him setting purty in one of em white houses, no sir, someday I'm gon come back here in a shiny car and sleek pants and laugh at your stupid Pa so long my sides gon hurt!"

The chain on the door lock rattled back and forth, then a loud banging sounded over the machinery.

"I told them coppers they weren't allowed in here. If they blab as much as your Pa . . . I'm coming! Wait up a second!"

His blunt fingers struggled with the door lock, then it bounded open wrenching the chain out of his hand. Shaw stumbled backwards as a black rubber-coated figure plunged into the shack, stopped suddenly, and stood in the center of the room with a puddle forming around his feet. The brown figure crawled over to the puddle around the black boots and began soaking it up with the scrub rag.

"Sure took your good time getting there, Shaw—raining like blazes!"

The trembling little man said, "Sorry Mr. Bayers, erry—didn't know it was you."

The black-coated man unlatched his boot straps and kicked them off, and they splattered muddy water on the wall. The muddy streaks on the wall were caught by a soapy rag as they ran down by the brown figure and were wiped away. Then the bent-over figure continued scrubbing the dried mash on the

floor.

"Mister Bayer, I got it ready for you, packed up like you said, nobody won't know what it ain't canned fruit or something."

"Load it in, the truck's out front."

"Yessir, yessir, Mr. Bayers."

"Shaw, can't you get this smell out of here any better than this?"

"We keep it scrubbed, Mr. Bayer, and hung bacca in the corners; don't know of no better way," and Shaw worked his body under the box. The weight pushed him forward and the box rested on his back as he moved snail-like towards the door. "Would you mind holding the door back, Mr. Bayers?" Shaw began to wobble beneath the box; liquid sloshed and glass jars rattled together.

Mr. Bayers snatched his head around and unwillingly headed towards the door. Suddenly his foot came down on the edge of the scrub pan sending yellow foamy water poured over his feet, seeping into his shoes and soaking the cuffs of his pants. Angry he kicked the wobbling pan across the room and his ruddy-red face grew rawer and his eyes swam in blood. Shaw set the box down heavily and stood holding with both hands on the door frame. The brown figure was scurrying across the floor on its knees towards the wobbling pan that hummed and rocked in the corner. Shaw overtook the figure and as it reached for the scrub pan, kicked its side. The figure shrieked and folded up in the soapy water. Shaw wavered, then caught his balance and looked at Mr. Bayers who still stared red-eyed at his wet leg. Shaw turned towards the box and mumbled to himself as he heaved it to his shoulders and pushed the door open with his foot. Mr. Bayers snatched up his boo's and walked out into the rain behind him.

The tail-gate of the truck slammed, the motor turned over, the wheels spun in the mud, and Mr. Bayers and his box disappeared in the rain. Shaw hobbled back through the mud and pushed open the door with his shoulder. His body fell forward in the doorway and the clang of the scrub pan against bone sounded above the rain and machinery. Shaw's face fell sideways in the foamy water and blood oozed out around it, turning pinkish among the bubbles. His pinched face and blunt fingers drew into a knot, then stopped, still. The brown figure gripped the shoulders of his loose shirt and felt the twisted bones beneath as they slowly dragged his feet through the door. Then the hands opened, sending the face splashing back into the bloody suds. Bare brown feet stepped lightly over the tangled body, lifting themselves quickly through the bloody, brown water. Then the brown figure slipped through the open door and ran through the mud, making prints that were eaten up by the rain.

\* \* \*

The ditch was wide and deep, and the topsoil in deep puddles made little sucking sounds as feet were withdrawn from it. Water trickled down the sides in small streams and was swallowed up in the oozing sand. It was draining down now from the land, washing around the rocks. On a high rock sat a brown figure that was watching the water float away the red smears from its feet. From its perch it watched the foaming water rush downhill and settle out clear in puddles beside the main stream and as they cleared the ripples grew small and disappeared as the puddles became full and still. Cattails bent along the side of the ditch and as they reached the rushing water, their fuzz was ripped loose and scattered in the foam. Frogs watched the muddy water from the high rocks, waiting for the rush to be over so they could hop down and wait again for the stagnant water to form around them. Water pushed everything

in its direction; the bull rushes, the water willows, and the loose dead sticks all pointed downstream.

The shiny brown feet were above the water now and they dried with a dull mud skim. The feet were still but the water was going lower, slowing and trickling in narrow waterfalls and the steady stream was breaking into scattered pools. The brown face turned without expression and stared at the curved and pointed frame of a dead animal. Honeysuckle vines climbed in and out of the lattice and held together the fleshless bones. The heavy head had fallen to the side, the huge dumb head of a mule, and a third hole gaped above the eyes. Its legs were coiled and wrapped around each other, loosed by the decayed skin. Green clumps of mud-clogged grass grew at the end of each leg, thriving on the rotten hooves, and one front leg lay in jagged slivers. Water still ran through the channel between the ribs. Suddenly an uprooted water willow began to twine through the cavity, but it stopped and shivered against the water as its roots caught around the sides.

The brown figure frowned and slipped off into the stream with its feet apart and water splashing around its legs. It grabbed the muddy roots of the willow, tugging madly and snarling as they crumbled in its hands. It pulled until the tree ripped free from the bones, uprooting them and leaving them criss-crossed in the honeysuckle. Then the thin arms of the brown figure swung the battered little tree around its body and flung it back into the moving stream where it tumbled over and over but soon caught again between the rocks. The figure slapped its foot in the shallow water and squeezed its hands until mud ran between the fingers.

"Go on! Go on, don't stop! and it kicked at the tree until it lazily rolled over into the stream, stopping once more and batting back and forth with foam sliding over its leaves. "Go on, don't stop now, go on!" and the figure turned its back and shrieked as the tree settled in the water. The shriek sounded above the bubbling of the water and the wide-eyed figure silenced as in fear of its own voice. Then it looked wildly to the top of the ditch where the sun shone through the water hanging in the air. The water was still coming from above in broken trickles and the grass above was spotted with clear drops and all the dry dust had been washed below.

Wet brown clothes clung to the lean brown figure and moved with its body as it began climbing up the crumbling bank, reaching for roots as it inched up the side. The brown hand reached over the top of the ditch and felt open fingered until its fingers clutched around a wet, leafy plant. The plant grew looser as the figure pulled itself upward then suddenly tore loose from the earth. The tiny brown figure tumbled down the bank, its hand clinging to green and purple fringed ragweed. As the body settled in the mud below, the hand raised the ragweed, watched the last few drops of clean water fall away, and slapped it into the mud. The body rose slowly and its feet sunk to its ankles in the mud, but its eyes stayed on the thin, fringed leaves that reached above the mud. Then it stooped and its hands lifted the ragged leaves from the mud until the bruised flower lay limply across its wrist. Then the hands dangled the flower in the water until the purple flower was rinsed clean and pressed the roots into the mud. The brown figure arose slowly and watched the purple and green against the brown. The light brown lips curled to the side and the brown foot pressed the weed back into the mud and twisted it below the surface.

Then the figure trudged upward against the stream towards the side gullies that had ripped the straight bank down to an angular slope and it climbed slowly upward through the sucking mud. Above were

the fields, spreading behind to the forests, ahead to the farms. The still wet grass of the field swished against the brown body and droplets zigzagged down the muddy legs and were flung off into the air. The legs burst the golden rod into flaxen flakes, pulling its feet from dead honeysuckle snags. It could hear the water sounds no more, just the grass sounds and the insect sounds as the grasshoppers hurred through the air and clung to its skin. The figure stopped in the tall grass and looked ahead at the white glare of the farm houses fringed with chinaberry trees and wrapped in white fences and screened-in porches.

The brown figure felt a sting on its shoulder, and in one motion, the head turned, the hand raised and a fragile grasshopper was crushed to sickly green blood than ran between the fingers of the brown hand. The hand brushed off the broken insect and the figure ran to the top of the tobacco dike to watch the white houses. Red and white chickens darted around under the porches, clucking and scratching in the shady dirt. The tin roofs flashed back at the sun and snapped and cracked as they dried out from the rain. White pigeons flapped their wings in the stray puddles and red birds dived from the trees to snatch the chicken's corn. The brown dirt was splotched with colors, then it was covered with the irregular green of the gardens.

The brown figure smiled and began running through the tobacco stubbles until it got to the white fence. The lean body slipped between the rails and began crawling through the green rows. Stopping below the vegetable tops, it looked at the squash and cucumbers and tomatoes shining yellow and green and red above their mud-spattered undersides. Beetles and potato bugs climbed tediously back up the stems after being bounced off by the rain. Crouching beside the sprawling tomato plants, the brown figure twisted off the red fruit and wiped it clean against its chest. As it bit through the tough skin, seeds and juice sprayed across the brown face and the hard fruit began to collapse. Suddenly it heard mud squishing and sucking at walking feet behind it.

"You stinking thief, just wait till my Pa hears about this!" And the brown face turned quickly and saw the fat form of a boy. He stood with his legs apart and fat hung on his bare knees and his hips jiggled up and down beneath the pressure of his hands. Then his right hand drifted up to his mouth and masterfully popped a chocolate from a wrapper into his mouth. As he chewed open-mouthed, his hand balled up the wrapper and thumped it at the figure.

"You know what my Pa does to thieves?" and the chocolate ran from his mouth as he paused for an answer. Throwing up his chin he said, "He takes 'em by the ears and drags 'em to that shed yonder and beats 'em to an inch of their life. I seen 'em and they bled and cried but he don't stop none." He grinned and as his spotted lips rolled away from a row of rotten teeth he said, "Shoulda seen what he done to the last un he caught; took a knife and started rite here," and he pointed to the middle of his protruding belly, "and cut clean up to here," and the finger moved up to his chin leaving a chocolate stripe on his shirt, "and took out all the guts and stuff while he was still alive and made him look at them before he . . ." and the shrill voice was cut off as the remains of the tomato splashed against his chin and dripped down on his chocolate smeared shirt.

He balled up his fist and hot tears poured down his cheeks. He kicked at the little brown creature but stopped suddenly in fear and backed up the row whimpering.

"T-T-Til--die," and he jumped up and down and waved his arms, "Til-die, come here, quick Tildie, help me, Tildie!" and he released a scream that made the brown figure start backwards.

The screen door on the back porch flew open, sending the snoozing chickens squawking and flapping off the porch in all directions. In the door stood a huge maid clad in white starch with a ruffled cap pulled around her gray frizzy hair. Then she bellowed, "Oh Lawdy, hold on Clarence, I'm coming!" and she waddled back inside and out again, bringing a jagged butcher knife in her hand. As she stumbled down the steps the chickens flapped madly away from her. She moved through the flower beds, trying to dodge the plants, but her rustling skirts caught at every snag and finally a mock orange thorn pulled her to a halt. She angrily snatched her white skirt loose, leaving a frayed square hanging on the bush. "I'm coming Clarence, honey, hang on baby, Tildie's coming!" and the fat woman pulled up her skirts and hobbled through the muddy rows. She stopped suddenly behind the screaming Clarence and her hands dropped to her sides in exhaustion. Her big breasts heaved up and down beneath the top of her ruffled apron. When her breathing slowed down, she shook the knife at the trembling Clarence and said, "You little whippersnapper you, here Tildie thought some mad dog or cotton mouth done got after her Clarence and it won't nothing but someone snitching maters."

Then Clarence bellowed, "Pa gon really give it to her, and I'm gon watch him beat her to a pup."

"Clarence you ain't gon do no such thing. Now get yourself in there and wash up that face fore the Missus sees you."

Clarence turned away from Tildie and looked on the ground for the tomato pulp and kicked it in the direction of the brown figure who ducked away from the mass of mud and tomato and smiled slyly at Clarence who stomped away towards the hand pump.

Tildie turned and said, "Mind you don't get that shirt wet," and she looked at the brown figure and said, "Third shirt today, work my poor old fingers to the bone just keeping clothes on him." Then she raised her chin and said, "Now then, how bout you chile? Don't you know it ain't rite to take folks stuff out asking. I knows you thought one or two maters don't make no matter, but other folks don't think so when it's their maters. Now Clarence there," she paused and smiled, "he just likes to stir up trouble mong folks." She stopped again, "Chile, don't your Me feed you?" Her question remained only a question as the brown figure stared blankly down the green rows.

Tildie spoke again, "Now I ain't gon repeat nothing you tell me. Don't your Ma look after you?" "She died with me!" a small voice blurted out.

"Oh you poor little chile, ain't no wonder you out on the loose like this," Tildie said sympathetically; "though I don't know what Clarence would have been a mite better off 'out that Ma of hissun," and Tildie looked at an upstairs window of the house where a black shade was pulled down. "Ain't you got no folks at all?" she said, looking down quickly as if she had invaded the privacy of the Missus.

"Got a Pa, but he ain't here, working crops off," and the small voice became stronger.

Tildie looked skeptically at the tiny figure and said, "Well, I knows a hungry chile when I sees one and I got plenty of fried chicken. Don't look like you could hold much nohow. Come on in the kitchen and we'll fish out a leg or two," and Tildie started back towards the porch. As the brown figure didn't stir from the ground, Tildie stepped and swung around with her hands on her hips. "Look here chile, you can't stay there and I'm offering you something to eat; nobody ain't gon care if you come in and get a speck of food, sides I wrung them fat hen's necks

and picked em myself so I got rite to give them to who I wants."

Tildie nodded her head as the brown figure looked up at the towering white-starched body. The muddy figure rose to her feet stiffly and walked slowly behind the waddling Tildie, putting her bare feet in the huge prints made by the maid. Tildie stepped heavily over the tangled remains of a mule drawn plow that stuck up angrily in the mud and the tiny figure carefully lifted her feet through the jagged blades. She followed her up to the porch where a little colored man was peeping around the corner with a rusty shot gun under his arm.

"Coy, ain't you found that rat yet? He's bigger than you are," and Tildie rustled into the steaming kitchen as he looked up to answer then turned back to look under the porch for the rat.

"Law me, they done boiled over!" and Tildie grabbed a cloth and began to lift the lid as the steam boiled into her face. She quickly lifted out the hot chicken and set it in a big platter. The little brown girl stood by the door with one hand on the screen and watched Clarence as he ripped open another box of chocolates. Tildie looked out of the steam with beaded sweat covering her face and throat. "Clarence, I done told you not to open another box today, someday you ain't gon have a tooth in your head." Shiny faced Clarence continued to tear open the box and stuck his tongue out at Tildie until she sighed and turned her face back into the steam.

"Have one Tildie," and she pushed him back as he poked her in the side with the chocolate box. Then he stepped back and pushed his box against the brown girl's shoulder. "Have one," he bellowed, and the figure didn't move. Stomping his foot Clarence shook the loose chocolates in the box then he darted from the room.

Tildie lifted up her platter of chicken and set it on the oilcloth, shoving out the table chair with her foot. "Set here chile in my chair and eat all you want, then be gone with you." The figure slipped into the chair and instantly grabbed a leg which she released with a cry and then turned and looked angrily at Tildie as she licked her burned fingers.

"Chile, I could have told you it was hot. You just don't bite into stuff fresh out of the pan," and Tildie pulled out a napkin and wrapped the leg bone and placed it in the brown hand saying, "Now let it cool a spell."

As the little figure tore into the meat, Tildie sighed and ran a glass of water and set it beside the platter. While the little girl gulped down the water, Clarence chattered from the doorway, "Hope you burn your mouth up!"

"Clarence, why don't you hush up. Shore was nice while you won't in here. If you can't say nothing nice, don't say nothing, you hear me?"

"Nay, nay, nay, you make me, fat, fat, fat Tildie."

"Hee, hee, ain't noticed you being none too thin yourself!"

"She eats like a pig," and he looked at the little girl and babbled "pig, pig, go oink, oink, oink."

"Law me Clarence, after the way you strewed your peas cross my clean white linen cloth last nite, and with company here too."

"They laughed, they thought it was funny!"

"Hee, hee, they was feeling so good, they woulda laughed if you turned the table over," and as Tildie laughed her chest heaved up and down. Then suddenly she frowned and said, "Maybe I ain't got no rite fussing at you, Clarence, seeing the way your Ma carried on and her a grown woman. Sometimes I wish she'd ne'er seen Mister Bayers and hislicker," and she glanced up as if seeing into the upstairs room that had the black shade.

"My Pa's gonna get a millyun dollars with his licker."

"He ain't your Pa, Clarence; you ain't got one, so hush about it."

"He is too, he is too!" Clarence shrieked.

"He ain't neither Clarence, I knows. Don't seem rite to say it since he seems so, but he ain't and I don't like them high-foo-looting ideas he's putting in your head."

Clarence cocked his head sideways as Tildie had seen him do before, so she turned away realizing he didn't understand her.

The tiny girl was still eating chicken and a stack of bare bones was on the oil cloth in front of her.

"Look at that pig, don't even know she's eating the finest pullets in the country."

Tildie ignored Clarence and looked down at the little girl, "Chile, you got any more clothes than that?"

The brown girl pushed back the bones on the cloth and said, "No, but it don't matter none."

"Chile, it may not matter none fore harvest, but come winter and frost and you gon near bout freeze."

The girl looked angered at Tildie's persistence and said in a useless voice, "Can't help it none."

"Lawd chile, I won't teasing you. I was just gonna ask if you mite like to take some of the things that the Missus don't want no more. She give em to me but my chilluns done grown up and gone and old Tildie couldn't get a big toe in none of em," and she began to laugh again, then stopped and smiled at the little girl waiting for an answer. "Well, answer me, chile, do you want them?"

The brown figure sat and watched the apples printed on the oil cloth and ran her finger around the red circles, appearing not to hear Tildie.

"Clarence, run get them things in that cardboard box at the foot of the stairs."

"Get em yourself, fat Tildie," and Clarence grinned and ducked behind the door.

Tildie sighed and rustled out of the room mumbling, "That boy gon be the death of me yet."

Tildie's footsteps were heard as she walked heavily down the stairs bracing herself on the banister. Then Clarence turned to the girl and said, "My Ma don't wear nothing but the finest New York frocks," and the last word dripped over his lips in a chocolate stain. Then he pulled up the front of his shirt and wiped his chin saying, "She don't have to wear them but once, then she throws them away." He looked with a sneer at her dress, a brown mash sack with two holes for her arms and one for her head. "She wouldn't even use that thing for a scrub rag," and he grabbed it by the shoulder and twisted it until it tore, then darted back against the cabinet as she swept off the bones on the oil cloth at him. The cabinet wobbled and a china tea cup fell off of its hook and broke in the bottom of the cabinet.

"You made me do it!" Clarence shrieked. "You did it!"

"Clarence, can't I leave you for one minute," and Tildie waddled back into the room with a box of clothes in her arms.

"Look what she did, broke one of Ma's best hand painted china tea cups, she did it on purpose."

Tildie frowned at Clarence and said to the girl, "Here, take the box and git fore his Ma wakes up. She can't see no wrong in him. Seems to me a blinking idiot could see it! I got too much to do to have you two breaking up housekeeping."

The girl lifted a dress off the top of the box; it was purple velvet with yellowing rhinestones embedded in it. The fur was rubbed smooth around the arm holes but it felt like moss to the little girl's touch. She buried her face in it and rubbed it around her cheeks, then snatched it away and stared wild-eyed at Tildie.

Tildie said impatiently, "Here, take the whole box, you can have them; now git fore the Missus comes down, git!"

"Git out of my house," Clarence bellowed, "we don't let thieves like you stay in here long."

The girl grabbed the box, kicked open the screen and went across the porch and down the steps.

"Didn't even thank you, ain't got no manners!"

"Oh, Clarence, sometimes I just wanna laugh at you," Tildie said as she stooped to pick up the scattered bones.

Clarence ran out on the porch and looked down at Coy, the hired man, who was still looking under the foundation with a shot gun in his hand. "Be still, Clarence, I seen the big un, musta been bigger than a cat."

"Thief, thief, thief," Clarence yelled and cried and pointed at the retreating figure. Coy blinked his eyes and looked at Clarence and said, "Better ask, Tildie."

"She's stealing my Ma's clothes. Ma will fire you if you don't git her! You're letting her git away, shoot, shoot quick!"

Coy's hand trembled with the shot gun as he nervously raised it to his shoulder and fired, falling back against the house.

The brown figure dropped the box dumping out its contents in the garden. The round pellets bounced off the fence while the figure stood erect and looked straight ahead.

"Shoot again," Clarence squealed, jumping and laughing with glee, "Git her good!" But Coy lay against the foundation pillar with his eyes blank and the shot gun out of his grip.

"Clarence you devil," and Tildie stood at the door, "you god forsaken no good devil!" and Tildie's face crumpled into her hands.

The brown figure stooped down and picked up the purple dress; the rhinestones flashed in the sun. She held it against her chest and began to run with her head down. Suddenly she fell to the ground and cried out as she sprawled on the jagged plow blade. She got to her feet quickly and ran with the dress pressed against her chest. Going to her knees in front of the fence, she crawled through and stumbled to her feet on the other side. She looked from side to side and ran towards the woods.

The trees were thin at first, but as they thickened with cedar and briars, she slowed down and finally when she got to the marshland, she collapsed on her knees in the stagnant water. She held the dress out of the mud and saw that her arm was covered with blood. Then she dipped it below the surface, watching the water discolor and shivering from the sting. When she lifted up her arm, she trembled as she saw the mangled skin which was soon covered over again with blood, then it fell in drops and spread in the green water and on the dress. She turned quickly and saw the blood soaking in the velvet making dark red spots. Then she angrily clutched the dress against her chest, but the blood was there too. Tears streamed down her face as she pounded the velvet against her bloody arm and the rhinestones dug into her torn flesh. Rushing to her feet with the dress in her hand, she startled the swampfrogs who pounced onto the stagnant water and disappeared below the surface as it closed over them with an oozing green scum. She stood with the green closing around her feet and felt her feet sink slightly into the soft marsh bottom as she watched until all the holes had closed over. Then she raised the dress over her head and threw it on the scum where it settled for a moment, soaked up the water, and bubbled below the surface. She watched until the circle of green was gone then began walking into the swamp water, breaking it with each step as she went deeper.



Nancy Estes

GHOST HERD

Lithograph

## Poems

“Tell them of Sunday mornings.”  
The voice settled back to listen.  
“Sunday mornings are best served  
with portable sunshine in a kit  
that always stays locked; the advantage  
being among brick buildings. Sunday mornings  
are aliens, finding the rocks before the island.  
Better to sleep, better to sleep.  
To wake is to remember.”

“Tell them of robber barons.”  
“Robber barons are waiting in coves and inlets  
with Jolly Roger keeping watch.  
And—there being a bird of peace on the masthead —  
they yawn, pat their mustaches, and smile.  
Robber barons are what you read about  
before the book got lost.”

“Tell them about the seasons.”  
“The seasons are divided by solstices and equinoxes.  
Summer is a fine time of night crickets and screen doors  
banging into Fall that falls asleep with Joseph’s coat  
for a blanket.  
Then come the days of waiting, cold days of vigil  
soundlessly moving the abacus beads,  
and Spring  
is the final disease of winter.

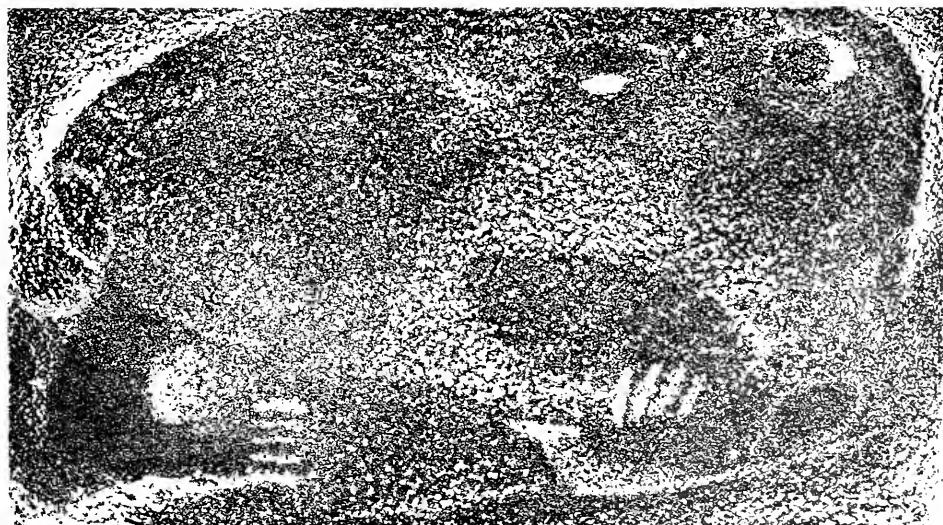
STELLA JEFFERSON

The woman dances in the rain;  
Gorgon-wreathed hair  
Silvered, phantom face.  
The falsely delicate body  
Embraced, embellished  
By a mid-nimbus.  
Strongest rib of Adam  
which conquered  
Strongest of men  
With a pair of sheep shears,  
Are not all your sheep?

Did it begin  
In innocence  
Playing house  
under a summer-oak?  
Or did you see  
The Secret  
In your mother’s eyes?  
Or did  
The wind whisper,  
A star sigh,  
Or  
When the first male-child came —  
Turned to stone?  
When? When?  
Thorned rose,  
Silence!  
Rain, go back!  
Go back, poor stained drops!

JOE BROWN

17



Phyllis Taylor

AUX ENNUYEUX

Etching

## False Spring

A web of twisted branches  
claws the grey dusk  
with sharp and jagged nails  
that can't draw blood  
from a deadly season.

A dawn of melted frost  
and mocking crystal air  
envelopes the dingy garb  
of a patient twisted branch  
with its ever seething core.

The pain of covered life  
that lives beneath the eye  
can hold its sticky tears  
no more in hidden prison  
and bursts with blossomed glory.

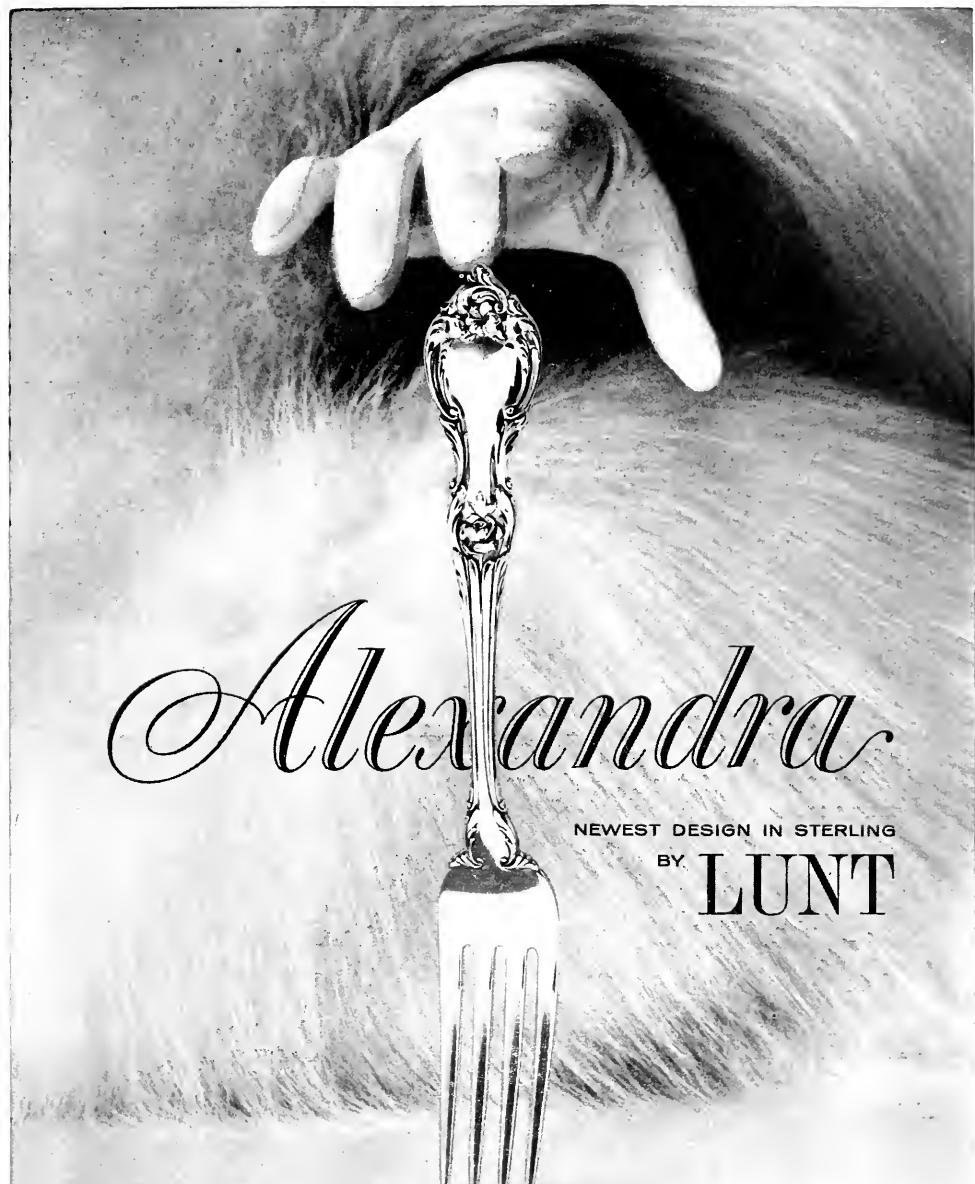
But a brief and futile glory  
droops wrinkled from its wound  
and shrivels from the freeze  
among the greyer dusk  
and rots from its own hand.

A dawn of twinkling dew  
with soft and humid air  
now beckons to patient life  
around a weeping branch  
whose sticky tears fall wasted.

SYLVIA WILKINSON

## The Lemmings

MARTHA ALICE MILES



# Alexandra

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Within several past years there has been a good deal of poetry published in the *Coraddi* by Heather Ross Miller. This spring Heather is graduating as a Woodrow Wilson Fellow, Phi Beta Kappa member, wife, mother, and poet. According to Mr. Randall Jarrell, Heather is "by far the best poet I've ever taught at the Woman's College." To Heather, the *Coraddi* staff extends its most cordial good wishes for the future.

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